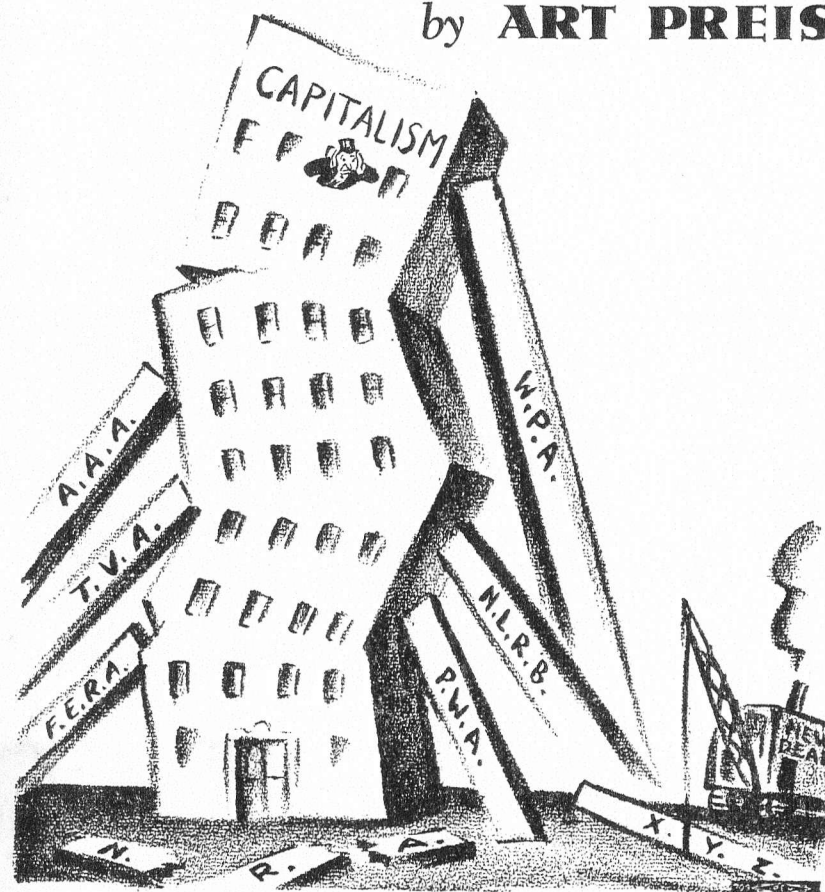


AMERICA'S PERMANENT DEPRESSION

The Truth About Unemployment

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America's Permanent Depression

The Truth About Unemployment



1. The Real Nature of Unemployment

Historians of some future age, unearthing current writings on the "New Deal" depression, undoubtedly will publish their findings in journals devoted to the study of mental diseases. The average "expert", when not blaming depressions on the misbehavior of sun-spots, usually attributes them to "lack of confidence" by the business class.

No doubt, pessimism has characterized the state of mind of the average business man during depressions. The economic guess-alls fail to show, however, whether this frame of mind is cause or result of such declines.

These economic gospel-pounders similarly view the facts of chronic mass unemployment. America's 15 million unemployed, who with their dependents represent almost a third of our population, when not dismissed as "lazy bums who won't work even if they have jobs", are considered at best temporarily unfortunate beings to whom some attention should be paid—after the real tragedy of declining profits has been properly remedied.

Between June, 1935, and August, 1937, dates which roughly mark the life span of the "New Deal Boomlet", unemployment was regarded as an irritating but not dangerous skin ailment, which could be concealed under the powder and rouge of mounting production and profit figures, and soothed whenever it itched by a light application of relief jobs.

F. D. R. undertook with undoubted optimism the national

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unemployment census in the summer of 1937. Production seemed headed for the 1929 peak. Business men were gay from heady draughts of fresh-drawn profits. Everything was hunky-dory, if only the budget were balanced, taxes reduced and the "goddam relief racket cut out".

The unemployed census figures were revealed finally in November, 1937. America was already hurtling down an economic landslide at the most precipitous pace in its history. What use to bemoan the fact of 8½-11 million unemployed *during the peak of a boom*, when six months later at least 5 millions more had been piled on these figures — and profits were melting away, to boot?

But the American workers dare not ignore these figures. They reveal a fact that is truly ominous. The figures of mass unemployment registered at the peak of Roosevelt "prosperity" prove conclusively that, despite temporary periods of comparative recovery, larger and larger sections of workers are condemned to *permanent joblessness — disemployment*.

This economically disenfranchised "nation within a nation" is supplemented from time to time by new jobless millions, periodically cast upon the waste shores of our economic system by each succeeding wave of depression. Some workers are lucky enough as individuals to be redrawn into the economic currents by the receding waves. Other millions are left permanently stranded, part of the rapidly accumulating wreckage of labor and talents, of human lives and aspirations which is mass disemployment in America.

Two factors distinguish the 1929-? decline from all previous depressions. One is increasing mass disemployment. The other is increasing regularity of periodic lay-offs suffered by almost every worker regardless of trade or industry. Unemployed of previous depressions were largely re-absorbed into industry during succeeding upturns. Each recovery period following former depressions surpassed previous booms in volume of production and establishment of new industries. Indeed, certain industries weathered former depressions fairly well, and workers in them considered themselves permanently secure. Until 1929, a railroad job was considered a life-time security. But the present decline has made an exception of no industry. For example, close to a million railroad workers have lost their regular occupations during the past nine years.

These burning facts must be seared into the consciousness of the American workers. *Every worker is threatened with the ravages of periodic lay-offs; increasing millions face the dismal future of permanent disemployment.*

The working class is paying an incalculable price for these conditions in physical suffering, disordered family life, mental break-down, disease and death. Compare the \$2,500 yearly income, estimated by the U. S. Children's Bureau as necessary to provide the minimum comfort and decency level of living for a family of five, with the \$400-\$700 per year which the average W.P.A. worker earns. Then remember that the W.P.A. workers, who represents less than 20 percent of the unemployed, are considered a relatively "privileged" group. We can well understand why certain authorities claim that the unemployed suffer proportionally five times as much from physical ailments as the rest of the population.

Further, the few comforts and conveniences the workers manage to accumulate over years of hard work are snatched away during even a few months of unemployment. A couple of installments missed, and automobiles, radios and washing machines are promptly hauled away. Every day, hundreds of homes, representing life-times of sacrifice, are foreclosed. Thousands of families are evicted from habitable living quarters into hovels and congested slums.

Should these conditions continue for any length of time, without stern efforts to fight back, the resistance of the American working class will be sapped. The unparalleled militancy displayed by the American workers during the past five years of bitter struggles will be dulled. Hunger and disease in time may demoralize the workers and drain their fighting spirit.

It is this possible demoralization, rather than any immediate suffering which is most to be feared. In Germany and Italy, desperate and demoralized unemployed, susceptible to demagogic appeal, and lacking powerful organizations knit firmly to the trade unions, helped form the fascist storm troops which utterly destroyed the labor movements of these countries. The American labor movement dares not permit our home-grown Hitlers so fruitful a field for exploitation. The consequences would be too hideous to contemplate.

2. *The New Deal and the Unemployed*

The problem of unemployment is the most challenging of our times. In scope, permanency, physical destructiveness, and political and social menace, it demands a solution far beyond mere relief measures.

For six years now, most workers and unemployed have looked to Roosevelt's New Deal program to affect that solution. Sufficient time has elapsed for us to judge accurately the aims and results of that program.

Borne into office on a tide of popular protest against the brutal Hoover regime, Roosevelt has steered a course with supreme political adroitness. So far he has been able to maintain his popular hold upon the masses of American people, although his policies have failed to effect a single fundamental change in our economic and social order.

For few political demagogues have demonstrated so great a divergence between the word and deed, the promise and fulfillment as has Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

The "money changers" whom he stormed against in 1932 are very much with us. Indeed, one of his first political acts, the Bank Moratorium, served merely to clean out small independent banks and small depositors. Backed by government sanction and credit, finance capital consolidated its power. For those who damn Wall Street while pinning a halo to F. D. R.'s scalp, it is well to recall that when the genial President had an unprecedented opportunity to uproot the choking weeds of Wall Street by nationalizing the banking system, he chose rather to nurture their growth.

Roosevelt's speeches championed the "little man", the small independent producer. His "Magna Charta", the National Industrial Recovery Act, as its outstanding achievement bankrupted thousands of "little men". Its price-fixing "codes of fair business practice" only further entrenched industrial monopoly.

Nevertheless, even critics of these measures make much of Roosevelt's "social" legislation, chief among which are the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the establishment of the Home Owners Loan Corporation and the Wagner Labor Relations Act.

The first was an attempt to subsidize wholesale crop and livestock destruction while a third of the nation was in dire want. It resulted in the ruin of thousands of small dirt-farmers, ten-

ant-farmers and share-croppers. Rich landlord farmers continued to collect their rents and shares while pocketing government bounty.

Far from protecting small home owners, the H. O. L. C. really guaranteed interest payments to banks, mortgage sharks and insurance corporations. Thousands of small home owners, unable to meet interest and payments on government loans, have been foreclosed. But the mortgage sharks get hard government cash in place of shaky mortgages, property taxes and risky investments.

Under the Wagner Act and its predecessor, Section 7A of the N. R. A., organized labor was presumably guaranteed the rights of collective bargaining free from coercion and restraint by employers. Yet in every great test of these acts, labor has won its rights only through militant mass struggle. The Maritime, Textile, Minneapolis Teamsters, Milwaukee Power, Toledo Auto-Lite, Koehler, Little Steel, General Motors and Rubber strikes, as well as thousands of other bitter contests, testify that Roosevelt has given the workers only the rights they always possess, — the rights they wrest from the ruling class in life and death combats.

But the greatest problem Roosevelt faced when he took office was unemployment. *There were 15 million unemployed in the U. S. when he assumed office. There are 15 million unemployed in the U. S. today.*

New Deal job-holders and political beneficiaries, as well as "liberals," labor "leaders" and "radicals," brush this decisive fact aside and chant in chorus, "But Roosevelt has done more for the unemployed than Hoover."

Granted! But these apologists fail to add *how much* more and *why* Roosevelt's concessions to the unemployed have been made.

Roosevelt's chief aids to the unemployed are Unemployment Insurance and Work Relief. The former is openly admitted to be very secondary as yet. Nevertheless, its provisions for the future prove it to be a bone with a string attached. It does not apply to millions of permanently disemployed, and at present covers less than ten percent of the gainfully employed. Its restrictions, its administration through reactionary and varied state control, its meagre benefits lasting but a few weeks, mark it as totally inadequate. The real pay-off is that most workers coming under its provisions might do better on relief.

This "benevolent" venture, adopted in most European countries years ago, is in reality a clever scheme for taxing the workers. A tremendous fund is being built up, largely from deductions in workers' pay. The scheme thus resolves itself into a system of deferred wage-payments whereby the workers pay the cost of their own unemployed relief.

It is the direct and work relief program of Roosevelt which constitutes his major attack on unemployment. The history of this program is one of constant mass struggle by the unemployed for every concession, and the skillful use of government funds for partisan political purposes. For relief comes under two headings on the Roosevelt budget — *riot insurance* and *political expediency*.

It is interesting to note the order in which Roosevelt applied himself to national problems when he took office. First, he safeguarded the big bankers. Next, the entrenched industrial monopoly. Finally, he threw a few crumbs to the unemployed, who were in mass ferment.

The Emergency Relief fund which was appropriated in the summer of 1933 was literally torn from the administration by riots and mass demonstrations. These first funds provided only a bare subsistence food order, and were so administered that scarcely a third of the needy received even these starvation benefits.

Roosevelt's first year in office drew to a close with the promise of mass re-employment under the N. R. A. completely unfulfilled. The C. W. A., the first federal work relief program, was then established. It was both an attempt to stifle mass revolt over the bitter winter months and the beginning of the "pump-priming" and credit inflation into which Roosevelt has been repeatedly forced when his other measures have proved insufficient to solve the economic crisis. The C. W. A. folded up within three months. The unemployed went back to dandelion greens.

This initial pump-priming was inadequate. Roosevelt "prosperity" failed to materialize. The unemployed were again on a rampage. Demonstrations and hunger marches swept the country. City halls, state and federal capitals were invaded by militant masses demanding relief. The F. E. R. A. work relief program was initiated in September, 1934.

This program was cleverly built up to provide maximum employment just prior to the 1934 elections. At its peak, the F.

E. R. A. provided jobs for a million less workers than C. W. A., although unemployment had failed to decline. After February, 1935, the F. E. R. A. was rapidly liquidated.

In June, 1935, the federal government ended the F. E. R. A., including its direct relief features. At one stroke, 5½ million relief families, 22 million individuals, were left to starve or, at best, return to the tender charities of bankrupt local and state treasuries. Of these 5½ million unemployed bread-winners, close to 2 million never secured jobs on W. P. A. These, together with an additional 5 million families estimated to have required relief in 1938, face a relief crisis unparalleled in six years. Relief break-downs in Cleveland, Chicago and other great cities revealed conditions as horrible almost as anything known under Hoover. The discontinuance of federal direct relief funds, coupled with a thoroughly inadequate job program, is principally responsible for these devastating relief crises.

During the period prior to W. P. A., a recurrent pattern marked Roosevelt's relief policies. Periods of starvation relief and coolie-wage jobs alternated with periods of outright starvation. This plan was calculated. The administration was testing how little it would take to quiet the unemployed. Further, it was blindly hoping for a substantial business pick-up. The pick-up failed. Demonstrations, hunger marches, riots spread. Shortly after the ending of F. E. R. A., Roosevelt noted a decline in his popularity. Production had registered scarcely any rises. Too many workers had to jam Section 7A down employers' throats with their bare fists. Relief, the premium on riot insurance, was too low.

The Magician of the White House pulled another trick rabbit from his hat. This time it was pump-priming on a larger scale, a "super" works program, — the W. P. A.

Much of the cheering for Roosevelt is based on the assumption that there has been a substantial improvement in the conditions of the unemployed during the W. P. A. period. Actual figures prove there has been a subtle *decline* in the living standards of the unemployed as a whole during this period.

The Roosevelt method of treating the unemployed is like that of the scientist with the frogs. The frogs were placed alive in a shallow pan of water, from which they could have easily jumped. The pan was heated gradually over a very low flame. The frogs failed to notice the change in temperature and even-

tually boiled to death. Had they been listening to an assuring "Fireside Chat" by F. D. R., they might have gone to their doom with a smile.

While Hoover threw the unemployed into a red-hot pan of outright starvation, Roosevelt supplies just enough relief jobs to keep the unemployed from "jumping out of the pan". He gradually accustoms them to lower standards by a form of stabilized poverty.

Since the federal government withdrew from the responsibility for direct relief, it has slowly reduced the appropriations for work relief in relation to the *total number* of unemployed.

At its peak in February, 1936, W.P.A. employed nearly 4 million workers. By July, 1937, although unemployment had declined less than 25 percent, the W. P. A. was reduced by ruthless wholesale dismissals more than 50 percent. The 1938 W. P. A. appropriation of \$1¼ billion is less than a third of the original appropriation, provides, during a period of much greater unemployment, a million less jobs, and will last not much after January, 1939.

The above figures, cited from government sources, reveal a startling fact. The total benefits for the unemployed as a group have declined in the past three years, particularly when contrasted with the actual number of unemployed at any given period.

Another startling fact is that *the national average of real work-relief wages has been reduced from the C. W. A. program to the present W. P. A. set-up.*

The W. P. A. began in the fall of 1935 with a great ballyhoo about "security" wages and "prevailing" rates of pay. It was better than direct relief; but what the administration gave with one hand — as usual — it withdrew with the other. By discontinuing direct relief, the government was able to provide, at little additional cost, slightly higher benefits to *less* workers.

Further, by an elaborate system of wage differentials, the \$55-60 monthly wage for unskilled labor in large centers in the northeast states was offset by incredible coolie wages in the South and rural areas. At its peak, W. P. A. wages, including all skilled and professional workers, averaged only \$45.91 *per month*. The C. W. A. paid \$15 weekly to unskilled labor, about \$65 per month. The F. E. R. A., at its high point, paid unskilled labor \$12 weekly, or about \$50 monthly.

For three years, the W. P. A. in certain southern areas paid

only \$19 *monthly*. The "security" wage is a ghastly fraud, unless it means simply security from immediate starvation. It does not mean in the real sense, "freedom from anxiety, want or poverty."

It is interesting to note how much Roosevelt has been moved by immediate political considerations in his unemployment policies. Both in 1934 and 1936, just prior to general elections, a sharp increase was noted in federal work relief employment. This was particularly apparent in the fall of 1936, when mass W. P. A. lay-offs were suddenly discontinued and the W. P. A. projects packed — although unemployment was declining.

Immediately following Roosevelt's re-election, 400,000 W. P. A. workers, most of them still displaying Roosevelt campaign buttons, were fired *en masse*. Within six months following the elections, almost three-quarters of a million W. P. A. workers received the reward of blind political faith in pink dismissal slips.

Just prior to the 1938 primaries, several hundred thousand new W. P. A. jobs were given in key states. At the same time, the administration was already laying the ground-work for future dismissals following the elections by predicting a large fall and winter industrial revival. The slightest business pick-up serves as excuse for mass dismissals. Such an excuse is a hoax. *Harry L. Hopkins himself has stated that the general level of production must be raised at least 40 percent above the 1929 all-time peak to re-absorb all able-bodied unemployed.* After four years of terrific pump-priming, the high point of the Roosevelt boom in July, 1937, failed even to reach the 1929 level.

3. The Real New Deal Answer to Unemployment

Where is the New Deal going? What is its real purpose and final answer to the unemployed? Behind all the twists, turns and contradictions, there is one fixed purpose. It is imperative that the workers cut through the fatty layers of propaganda and expose that vital spot.

Truth to tell, Roosevelt has been pictured in so many diverse aspects by pro- and anti-New Dealers that the average person grasps only a confused and distorted image of him.

By his foes on the right, hard-bitten industrial feudalists, he is frequently painted a bloody revolutionist destroying the most "sacred" rights of private property. To these gentlemen,

whose minds see no farther than the end of a black-jack, the slightest gesture of pacification offered by Roosevelt to the dispossessed, even though the gesture be made with an empty hand, appears as calculated betrayal of their class interests.

By his friends of the "left", — the "progressive" capitalists, the liberals and reformists, the steel and munition barons, Stalinists, peace-time pacifists and the general mongrel breed yelping for a "democratic" war against fascist powers — by these he is still hailed the new St. George of the common man.

From time to time, each camp is forced to modify its particular portrait. Juicy appropriations for military purposes, R. F. C. "relief" for "starving" bankers and railroad tycoons, shelving of the undistributed profits tax cause the "Tories" to nod benevolently in his direction. "The kid's got talent," they affirm, "If he'd only cut out the spees with those red bums around the corner, and stick to business —".

When Roosevelt, the great democrat, counterposes only an impressive silence to the labor-smashing brutalities of Hagueism; when the State Department, on orders from the blood-sucking American oil, land and mineral interests, attempts ruinous economic reprisals on impoverished Mexico; when a "neutral" arms embargo is imposed on anti-fascist forces in Spain, while unhampered shipments of war supplies to Japan continues; when, in fact, Roosevelt demonstrates his more than detached concern for the interests of the ruling class, the loyal "leftists" sadly shake their heads, and paint the picture of a noble soul misled by insidious powers betraying him from within his own camp.

All of these estimates are false to the core. In actuality, Roosevelt is the ablest and most far-sighted politician yet produced by the American capitalist class. *His sole objective, linking into a single chain all his seemingly contradictory acts, is to save and stabilize the system of American capitalism.*

The means by which this objective is to be attained are dazzlingly clear. All the main lines of Roosevelt's strategy, legislation, statements and executive policies point to that means: *imperialist war.*

American capitalism, torn by the same internal contradictions besetting every capitalist nation, is competing in every portion of the globe for outlets for surplus capital and products unmarketable at home. Big Business faces the menacing shadow of mass unemployed millions whom industry can never re-absorb.

The government credit structure mounts toward top-heavy heights. The administration is unable, except by huge "pump-priming" involving heavier and heavier tax-loads, to balance mass purchasing power with production, prices and profits. Therefore, the American ruling class prepares for its inevitable and desperate bid for survival through the military subjection of its imperialist rivals.

It is the role of Roosevelt to best prepare the nation for this task. *That is why, regardless of opposition on domestic policies, his foreign policies and naval and military expansion program have received almost unanimous support from Big Business and its press. For these are the living heart of his program.*

While this or that group of special capitalist interests, as a matter of principle, howl at every work relief appropriation or act dimly favorably toward labor, *to a man they vote hands down for the biggest dent in the national budget, the war preparations appropriations, which in 1938 are by far the largest in the peacetime history of this nation.*

Roosevelt is perfectly aware that the successful pursuit of his imperialistic policies necessitates the support of every section of the working population. So he seemingly be-friends the workers in small things, the better to betray them in great.

Further, Roosevelt understands how vital to his ultimate program is the preservation of peace between capital and labor. The contradictions of his program reflect his efforts to maintain a peaceful balance between the classes. On the one hand, he maintains his hold upon the masses by attacking the ugliest superficial manifestations of capitalism. On the other, he tries to keep the capitalist system as such strengthened and intact.

To maintain class peace in America becomes increasingly difficult for Roosevelt. He is unable for any length of time to pacify the employed workers by paving the way for wage concessions, for he must immediately cancel these out by measures which induce price rises and protect profit levels. He cannot indefinitely pacify the unemployed. New waves of unemployment force him to spread relief appropriations in thinner and thinner layers, while the ruling class thunders at him because of the inevitable increase in his requirements upon it.

So Roosevelt, offering his favors now to the left and now to the right, subduing with increasing difficulty the constantly smouldering class conflicts, hastens his course toward imperialist

war before recurring and constantly deepening economic crises explode into naked and tremendous class conflicts.

Roosevelt plans to put the unemployed to work — as cannon fodder. The ruling class prepares to receive dividends on every dollar spent for relief. These dividends will be exacted in support for the Roosevelt war program. Every concession to the unemployed, every slightest social reform bears a price tag, marked in workers' blood, "Support of Imperialist War".

4. *The Only Genuine Program for the Unemployed*

Just as the sick are victimized by scoundrels selling dangerous and worthless "cures," so diseased social systems have their patent-medicine racketeers. These vend their pain-killers and phony drugs with even greater cynicism and danger to human welfare than the rats who sell colored water to cancer victims.

These patent medicine men, with ballyhoo and fraud, palm off their neatly labeled bottle to the victimized masses, seeking a riddance to their miseries. Whatever these bottles may be marked, — "Inflation" or "Deflation," "Price-Fixing" or "Free Play of Prices", "Spending-Lending" or "Budget-Balancing", "Collective Security" or "Isolation", — they all have one thing in common. None of these colored waters attacks the real source of our social disorders, *the system of capitalism*; all prolong these disorders by delaying adequate treatment or actually aggravate more deadly attacks.

The *cure* of mass unemployment cannot be affected by any of the measures projected within the frame-work of capitalism. The tiny class which controls the natural resources and productive and distributive mechanisms of our society is interested solely in profits and privilege for itself. The government, its agency for maintaining it in power, regards and treats unemployment as a *temporary* condition. At best, the government seeks only to alleviate the most outright suffering induced by unemployment, and then only when and where the pressure of the workers themselves is strongest.

Relief, even when administered in the form of made-work such as W. P. A., is like morphine, which momentarily deadens pain but does not *cure*. Eventually, the capitalist class will con-

sider even "relief" too expensive, will reduce the doses as it is trying to do already, and finally withdraw them altogether.

The workers dare not be content with "dope" for their suffering. They must fight unemployment at its very source, *the capitalist system*. No program to eliminate unemployment can be honest or effective which is not based on *the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of a non-profit, collective economy controlled by and for the workers, working farmers and impoverished middle-class*.

The keystone for the bridge toward such a collective system is *workers' control of industry*. The workers must tell their financial and industrial over-lords. "You've had your chance to run this country and you've run it into the ground. You have only contempt for the millions whose labor built this country. You want only wealth, idle luxury and privilege for yourselves, while the vast majority suffer want and insecurity. If you can't give us steady work with a decent standard of living — and you have proved you can't! — get out! We'll take over the factories, mines, and railroads and we'll operate them co-operatively for the benefit of all and not just a few."

Many intelligent workers who agree with this, nevertheless, will ask, "But what shall we do *now*? We are insufficiently organized and not powerful enough yet to establish full control of the economic system. Too many workers are still unconvinced that this is necessary. Yet, we are suffering now!"

We must do what a competent physician does in treating a dangerously ill patient. First we must attempt to *build up the natural resistance of the workers*. As a doctor tries to reduce fever, ease pain, regulate diet to create the most favorable conditions for effective permanent treatment, *we must organize the unemployed workers, in unity with their employed brothers, to resist every single encroachment of the capitalist disease even while we prepare the anti-toxin which will destroy it utterly*.

First and foremost, we must demand and fight for *jobs now* — not just two or three million temporary subsistence relief jobs — but *steady decent jobs for every one of the 14-15 million unemployed men and women in the U. S.*

These jobs are to come from two sources. *The first is a gigantic permanent national public works program. This is to provide employment to all unemployed, whether on relief or not,*

or whether any other member of the family is working. The projects must be of immediate benefit to the workers themselves, and not restricted in type by the competitive claims of private industrialists. Low cost housing, slum elimination, public hospitals and clinics, not National Guard armories, should be the cry.

Secondly, *all idle factories, mines, etc., or productive equipment working below normal capacity, shall be turned over to the unemployed to produce goods for their own benefit. The government is to provide the initial capital to secure equipment and raw materials.*

It is insufficient merely to have jobs. *Such jobs must provide a minimum income sufficient to maintain decency and health, at least \$30 per week at present price levels. Trade Union rates should prevail on all work.*

Further, there must be a tremendous campaign to compel industry to reduce the work day and work week, so that large numbers of unemployed may be reabsorbed into private industry. *We must demand the six-hour day, and five-day week with no reductions in the individual worker's total earnings.*

The funds for this program must be secured by the government from the bankers and industrialists. First, *all war funds must be re-allocated to the aid of the unemployed*. The billions of dollars being fed into the pockets of the steel and munitions barons in preparation for the imperialistic slaughter of the workers must be diverted into the workers' pockets through *socially useful work*.

Further, *the banking system must be nationalized, all surplus capital and idle assets to be used at once in financing work for the jobless.*

In addition, *all industries, such as the railroads, which have been bleeding the public treasury to pay dividends on watered stocks and bonuses to conniving company officials, shall be expropriated and placed under the direct cooperative control of the workers in the given industry. Billions in R. F. C. funds will then be available for the unemployed.*

Further funds could be secured by *confiscatory taxes on the billions in undistributed profits and idle surpluses extracted from the workers by the big industrialists, U. S. Steel, General Motors, Ford, etc.*

Lastly, there should be levied a *heavy capital tax on the millions and hundreds of millions in the private fortunes of the Sixty Families and their cohorts.*

The workers want decent jobs, security, a measure of comfort, education and culture. America has the productive capacity to provide everyone with a secure and comfortable living standard. The first job is to organize the workers, employed and unemployed, to fight for a decent living as their *inalienable right*. And if capitalism and its government cannot provide the workers the opportunity to enjoy these rights, the workers will be ready to go forward and seize these rights for themselves under the only system capable of providing them, *Socialism*.

5. The Correct Program Needs the Correct Organization

The finest program that remains on paper has less worth than the paper itself. A program to be of worth must be transformed into action, attainable only through organized effort.

There is no blue-print for the best type of unemployed organization. Mass unemployment is characteristic of the decline of the capitalist system. This phenomenon took startling form in the United States only since 1929. The scores of years in which the trade union movement had opportunity to gather experience by trial and error have been denied the unemployed.

Nevertheless, in the past nine years the unemployed have gone through a heightened organizational activity which has telescoped a wealth of experience into a comparatively brief time.

Until the present "Roosevelt Depression," the unemployed were organized largely in independent organizations, unattached to the official trade union movement. In the past, the trade union movement, dominated by conservative and reactionary leadership, opposed such organization. The old-line bureaucrats were interested solely in workers who could pay high dues. Further, they feared, and correctly so, that such organization might lead into direct conflict with the government. Besides, the average labor leader, steeped in capitalist philosophy, no more understood the depth and permanency of the economic crisis than did the capitalist leaders themselves.

It remained for the working-class anti-capitalist political groups to undertake the fight for the unemployed, for these were the only ones who understood the real nature of the crisis.

Three organizations grew up, the Unemployed Councils, organized by the Stalinist Communist Party, the Unemployed Leagues, organized by the American Workers Party which later merged with the present Socialist Workers Party, and the Workers Alliance, initiated by the Socialist Party.

In April, 1936, these three national bodies merged into one, the Workers Alliance of America, which has since remained the only national independent organization for the unemployed.

It is significant that each of these organizations was based originally on an anti-capitalist, class-struggle program which claimed to rely only on independent working-class mass action, and no reliance on any of the ruling class parties or politicians. They were *fighting mass* organizations whose militant actions forced innumerable concessions for the unemployed at a time when no other labor groups recognized the unemployed and their problems.

The decline of the Unemployed Leagues and Councils was due mainly to organizational instability. The former based itself largely upon rural workers, and suffered for lack of concentrated organization in the industrial centers. The Councils were dominated by the Communist Party, which in the period from 1929-1934 was so "ultra-revolutionary" as to characterize all other working-class organizations as "*social fascist*." They literally drove their own members away. The Councils were not a mass non-partisan union of unemployed, but satellites of the Communist Party.

After the single unified Workers Alliance was established, the problem of stability was felt to be solved. But with that stability came a decline in the militant working-class principles which were the heart of effective organization.

The reason for this decline is directly due to the influence of the Stalinists within the Workers Alliance. Following the policies of the reactionary Stalin regime in the Soviet Union, which has been seeking alliances with various capitalist governments and trying to tie the workers to the "democratic" capitalist war machines, the American Stalinists are seeking to behead militant labor organizations and chain the working class to the

Roosevelt imperialist government. In the Workers Alliance, the Stalinists have attempted and largely succeeded in not only curbing direct action and agitation for better conditions which might "embarrass" Roosevelt and "New Deal" Democrats, but have literally turned the Workers Alliance into a direct political apparatus for Roosevelt. The net results are that the Alliance is more and more taking on the character of a *company union*. For it is impossible to fight the bosses, in this case the Roosevelt administration, and to collaborate with them at the same time.

More and more, the Alliance assumes all the insidious organizational methods of the Communist Party itself. Militant members are framed-up and expelled. Whoever opposes collaboration with the W.P.A. authorities, or proposes militant action, is promptly made the victim of a slander campaign and driven from the organization. During the height of the Roosevelt depression, the Alliance failed to win a single major concession for the unemployed and W.P.A. workers, contrary to the record of the unemployed organizations during all previous years of the decline.

Within the Alliance itself, there is growing dissatisfaction. With a free field, during a period of extensive unemployment, it has failed to show decisive growth. Except for a favored few, to whom the administration can well afford to extend individual privileges in return for curbing militant action, the members are not getting any real benefits. Conditions are growing worse, and the Alliance leadership will not permit a genuine fight. As a result, the Alliance is cracking up.

Today it becomes increasingly clear that a new road, already mapped out in Minneapolis, Detroit and other centers, must be opened up, that the unemployed must be organized together with the employed workers, so that they will not become prey for the fascists. It cannot be denied that the trade unions, particularly the C.I.O., have lost many thousands of members during the present depression through their failure to effectively defend the interests of the unemployed.

The defense of these interests does not rest with conferences and statements between the government and the top union leaders. It can lie only with militant mass organizations of the unemployed workers themselves, who, with the assistance of organized labor as a whole, are best able to defend their own interests.

It is the imperative duty of the official labor movement to organize the unemployed and relief workers into bodies with the same status and prestige as all other unions. It is the duty of every serious militant trade unionist to press for the establishment of such unions.

With such organization, infused with a living, fighting program, a tremendous step forward will have been taken toward the day when unemployment and poverty will be driven from a world which the workers will truly call their own.

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of the workers of the world;

IF you are against the world-wide tyranny
of fascism;

IF you are against the criminal destruction
of the results of centuries of labor in cre-
ating the wealth and culture of the world;

**THEN YOU ARE AGAINST CAPITALIST WAR!
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